



PHILADELPHIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DIRECTIVE 12.1

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SUBJECT: OFFICIAL FORMAT FOR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

1. POLICY

- A. The following guidelines have been established to provide uniform standards for the preparation of memoranda, white papers, reports, letters, and computer messages. Personnel will ensure that the formats described herein are utilized in all documents prepared as part of their assignment as members of the Philadelphia Police Department.
 - B. Proper sentence structure, good grammar, correct spelling, and punctuation must be considered an important aspect of any Departmental document.
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2. MEMORANDUMS

- A. The memorandum form (82-S-1) should be used for formal correspondence and extensive administrative information between parties, especially when such correspondence or information is being sent through the chain of command. All information should be typed. Multiple pages may be used by attaching a sheet of plain white paper and including the same title as noted on the memorandum, approximately 1½ inches from the top of the page. Multiple pages should be numbered.
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3. MEMORANDUM FORMAT

- A. In order to identify our Department, type in capital letters above "City of Philadelphia" the word "POLICE".
- B. Number each paragraph for easy reference and use a dash (-) to separate the numbers indicating month, day, and year.
- C. Addressing a Memorandum:
 1. TO: The person who requested the information or to whom the memorandum is directed.

- a. When addressing a commander of a district/unit/division type:

Commanding Officer, 18th District
Commanding Officer, Highway Patrol

- b. When addressing a commander above the rank of Inspector type:

Deputy Commissioner, Patrol Operations
Chief Inspector, Roc North

2. FROM: Type your rank, full name, badge number, and district/unit.
3. SUBJECT: In capital letters and underlined, describe briefly the contents of the report.

D. Content of a Memorandum

1. The opening paragraph should contain a brief synopsis indicating the general content of the report. It should also include enough information so that the reader can quickly evaluate and understand the topic of the memorandum.
2. The succeeding paragraphs make up the body of the report and must be composed in logical sequence. Attention should be given to the chronological order of events, and care must be exercised to ensure that all necessary information is included.
3. Paragraphs should also be connected in a logical relationship. Use transitional words or phrases such as:

Additionally,
Consequently,
For this reason,
4. The answers to the questions Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How must be provided in the memorandum. If it is necessary for the recipient of the report to request additional information, the report is incomplete.

E. Spacing

1. Center the memorandum, leaving a minimum margin of 1½ inches on each side of the page. A left margin of two inches should be made if the document is to be placed in a binder. A margin of 3" at the bottom of the document should be available for endorsements.

2. Begin writing the memorandum at least two spaces below the SUBJECT line. Arrange the spacing so that the paragraph number is directly under and in line with the first letter of the first word outlining to whom the report is addressed, the person who is submitting it, and the subject matter (see example below).

TO: Commanding Officer, Research and Development

FROM: Det. Karyn Doe, #123, Research and Planning Unit

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

1. I respectfully request a leave of absence...

3. Allow two spaces between paragraphs.
4. About one inch (7 spaces) below the final paragraph draw a horizontal line, approximately three inches from the right hand margin. Immediately below the line type the name, rank, badge number, and district/unit of the person submitting the memorandum. Sign your name on the line.

F. Endorsements

1. Memorandums and requests must be endorsed through the chain of command, unless otherwise directed. Endorsements should indicate either approval or disapproval.

4. WHITE PAPERS

- A. A white paper should be prepared for information that is considered sensitive, or to which a limited number of people should have access, such as command level personnel.

B. Internal White Papers

1. The document will be typed on a plain sheet of white paper (8½" x 11") and the content should be similar to memorandum content outlined in Section 3-D above. Spacing should be the same as in the memorandum described in Section 3-E, paragraphs 1 and 3. Multiple pages may be used and attachments should be paper clipped to the document and numbered.
2. The title of the document should be at the top, center of the page in capital letters. (WHITE PAPER is not a proper title.) The bottom center of the document should contain the name or the district/unit of the submitting party and the date submitted in capital letters.

3. If the document is to proceed through the Department's mail service it will be placed in a sealed messenger envelope.

C. Computer-generated White Papers

1. White papers prepared by investigative personnel for computer transmission to commanders concerning a particular investigation should be brief and specific, noting pertinent facts, dates, and times. District Control numbers, Unit Control numbers, warrant numbers, and any actions taken by police should also be included.

5. REPORTS

- A. Reports are written or typed communications by personnel of the Philadelphia Police Department for the dissemination of information both within the Department and to outside agencies.
- B. The report should contain the following divisions and in the order indicated below.
1. TITLE - clearly indicate the overall scope of the report.
 2. INDEX - clearly list in chronological order the contents of the report.
 3. INTRODUCTION - present a brief summary of the contents of the report and how the information may be utilized. Also include background information.
 4. DISCUSSION - provide complete and accurate information relating to the topic. The information in this section should support the writer's conclusion and recommendations. If the discussion is broken into subsections and/or the report is extensive, tabs and dividers should be used between all of the divisions.
 5. CONCLUSION - the writer's opinion based on the evaluation of facts.
 6. RECOMMENDATIONS - should describe suggestions for a more efficient operation and/or solutions to problems based on the facts presented.
- C. REPORT FORMAT
1. A margin of two inches must be maintained along the top, bottom, and sides of the document, and pages will be consecutively numbered. Paragraphs should be numbered or lettered, as appropriate and will be indented five spaces from the left margin.

2. When necessary, additional remarks will be written on a separate memorandum and attached to the outside of the report. Endorsements shall be included through the chain of command.
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6. LETTERS

- A. Official Philadelphia Police Department stationery will be used when corresponding with other City departments, private businesses, organizations, or individuals on Department-related issues. There are four major divisions in a standard business letter:
 1. **HEADING** - contains the letterhead and the date the letter is prepared.
 2. **OPENING** - includes the complete address of the recipient (must match the address on the envelope) and the salutation or opening greeting. The salutation should begin directly under the first letter of the address and is followed by a colon (:). Abbreviate only the following titles: Mr., Mrs., Ms., and Dr. All other titles should be written out.
 3. **BODY** - includes an introduction of the subject matter which establishes contact with the reader's interest and the entire text. Its content is similar to the content described in Section 3-D above. The last few sentences should tell the reader what to do or what the writer will do. It should also create good will and end on a positive note.
 - a. A standard business letter requires no indentation of paragraphs.
 - b. Single spacing within paragraphs and double spacing between paragraphs are standard format. If a computer is being used, a "justified" text is appropriate.
 - c. Margins should be one to two inches (left, right, and bottom)
 - d. The letter should be typed.
 4. **CLOSING** - includes the complimentary parting phrase (e. g., Sincerely yours,) the writer's signature, the writer's identification (printed name and title), the reference initials (writer's initials then the typist's initials), enclosure notation, where appropriate (reminder that the letter includes an accompaniment), and a copy notation (names of those who will receive a copy of the letter).
 - a. The complimentary parting phrase, the writer's signature, and the writer's identification should be placed to the right of the page, two spaces below the body of the letter.

7. COMPUTER MESSAGES

- A. Computer messages are used to send information throughout the Department or to a specific district/unit. The information must be of Department-related topics such as investigations, policy changes, personnel information, etc. only.
- B. The format is the same as for memoranda:

TO: whom the computer message is being sent
FROM: whom the computer message is being sent (name, rank, unit)
SUBJECT: TOPIC OF THE MESSAGE
- C. Number each paragraph and ensure single space within paragraphs and double space between paragraphs.
- D. The identification of the individual requesting the computer message (generally a commander) will be placed at the bottom, center of the page along with their district/unit name. The individual forwarding the actual message will place their name on the last line of the computer screen in the lower left hand corner, followed by their payroll number.
- E. All computer messages must be approved at the highest level of command depending on the message content. Department-wide policy changes to directives, memorandums, etc. must be approved by the Police Commissioner, after a review by the Research and Planning Unit.

8. ELECTRONIC MESSAGES (E-MAIL)

- A. Only Department-related issues may be transmitted to receiving parties and only on city-owned computers. All e-mail messages must be approved by the immediate supervisor.

NOTE: Certain information may require approval through the chain of command before it can be transmitted.
- B. Although these documents are generally less structured, the content and spacing for e-mail messages should be similar to the memorandum. They should also be brief, and include some kind of greeting (e.g., Dear Mr. Parker).
- C. Always include a subject heading and use upper and lower case letters as you would in any business letter.

- D. Check e-mail messages at least once each working day and respond within 48 hours.
 - E. Extensive time consuming contacts are prohibited as are contacts through “chat rooms”, etc. which are unrelated to Departmental assignments. Private correspondence does not belong on e-mail.
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9. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED DOCUMENTS

- A. Make use of a dictionary and thesaurus on a regular basis.
 - B. Use a book on grammar, business writing books, etc. when available.
 - C. When possible, after a document has been prepared and before it is distributed, the writer should put it away for at least a week, then review the document again. Mistakes will almost certainly appear.
 - D. Have someone else proofread your document before distribution.
 - E. Double check spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
 - F. Utilize the spell check and grammar check functions when preparing documents on a computer. They are not perfect, but they will help.
 - G. When using Microsoft Word applications, “Times New Roman” font and “12” point are standard letter size and appropriate for most of the documents mentioned.
 - H. Use correct titles and ensure all names are correctly spelled.
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BY COMMAND OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONER
